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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005210

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR HURRICANE KATRINA TASK FORCE
DEPT PLEASE PASS DHS FOR FEMA/OIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TFUS01: TURKS RESPOND WITH COMPASSION AND
GENEROSITY TO KATRINA

REF: A. STATE 163366

[B](#). ANKARA 5193

[C](#). STATE 162270

[D](#). STATE 163278

[E](#). STATE 163729

[1](#)1. Summary: The GOT and Turkish citizens responded generously and compassionately in the aftermath of Katrina, both by publicly expressing condolences and by offering assistance to the affected region. Prime Minister Tayip Erdogan rebutted some of the commentary in the Islamist-oriented press by noting that those who believe that God is causing Americans to pay for their actions abroad are expressing ignorance. Post issued a press release thanking the Turkish government and people for their compassion and generosity and will respond to individual letters of condolences. End Summary.

OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE

[1](#)2. On September 5, ADCM spoke with MFA Deputy Director General for International Political Organizations, Tunc Ugdul. Ugdul confirmed the GOT offer passed by the Turkish embassy to the Department on September 2 to provide a search and rescue team. We understand that disaster relief agencies are currently evaluating this offer. Per ref A, ADCM communicated the list of immediately needed items to Ugdul by phone on September 5 and sent a hard copy on September 6.

[1](#)3. Separately, on September 5, Turkish businessman Hasan Akincioglu offered 1.2 million bottles of US Army VETCOM approved water to the relief efforts, which was transmitted by Ref B and by e-mail to the Task Force. Comment: Post believes that this offer of assistance deserves serious consideration. As stated in ref B, the cargo is currently located near Incirlik airbase. As Incirlik is a cargo hub with both contract wide body jets coming from the US and C-17s rotating in and out, it may be possible to take advantage of a scheduled flight to the US to deliver this assistance. End comment.

[1](#)4. In addition to the search and rescue team offered by the GOT, on September 7, the Nilufer Search and Rescue Team, a Turkish NGO that operates in connection with the GOT Ministry of Interior and has previously assisted with other international disasters, contacted econoff to offer their services and inquire about visa requirements for rescue personnel. Econoff will coordinate with Task Force to process this offer of assistance.

[1](#)5. Turkish Red Crescent Society (TRCS) Head of International Department Deniz Solen informed econoff that the TRCS is working with the International Red Crescent Society to determine what type of assistance, either cash or in-kind, will be donated. TRCS is also accepting calls from Turkish private citizens who wish to make a donation. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Regional Delegation Disaster Education Officer Ozlem Cook told econoff that they are coordinating any assistance with the Red Cross Office in Geneva. They are also providing interested callers with the wire transfer information for the American Red Cross,s Hurricane Katrina relief fund.

PUBLIC CONDOLENCES

[1](#)6. Turkey,s political leaders have made public statements of sympathy and solidarity in the aftermath of Katrina. Rebutting some of the commentary in the Islamist-oriented press, Prime Minister Tayip Erdogan noted in a September 6 speech that "Our God is compassionate. He is merciful. Through his compassion, my God shows mercy to all mankind. To say that our God has made certain people pay for their actions in this way is a weakness) it is an expression of ignorance." Following the September 6 meeting of the Council of Ministers, Government Spokesman Cemil Cicek said "we share the pain of the people of the United States, our friend and

ally. Our wishes, in the spirit of our customary solidarity and cooperation, have been brought to the attention of the US Administration." In addition to these public statements, both the PM and Fon Min Gul conveyed letters of condolence to their USG counterparts. President Sezer has also sent a letter of condolence to President Bush. The Mission has received numerous expressions of personal condolences.

EMBASSY RESPONSE

17. On September 7, the Turkish dailies widely carried the embassy's press release in response to the numerous condolences received. Begin text of press release: The Embassy would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Turkish authorities and the Turkish people for the solidarity and concern they have shown in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. We greatly appreciate the public statements of sympathy and support made by Turkey,s leaders in the wake of this terrible tragedy, and we are grateful for Turkey,s generous offer of assistance for the relief effort. Many non-governmental organizations and private Turkish citizens have also come forward to offer contributions for Americans in their time of need, and to express their condolences for those who have suffered. We are humbled by this sincere desire to help those who have been uprooted in the disaster, and the outpouring of concern by the citizens of Turkey. The messages of support coming from Turkey, our friend and ally, have been heard and greatly appreciated by the US Government and the American people. End text.

18. Embassy and Consulates will respond to personal letters of condolence.

COMMENT

19. PM Erdogan plans to visit the US the week of September 12 to participate in the UNGA opening meetings. There is speculation (at this point unconfirmed) that he may try to visit the affected area during that visit. Post will continue to monitor Turkey's response to Katrina. End comment.

POST POC

110. Post POC is Economic Officer Rebecca Patrick (x.2255 or patrickrk@state.gov).
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